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ABSTRACT

"La Chute de la Maison Usher" is a film adaptation by Jean Epstein of two stories by Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Oval Portrait." This film was typical of Epstein's artistic preoccupation with the ambivalence of reality as expressed in fantasy or surrealism, in qualities of movement, and in the vagaries of seeing and hearing. There are three aspects of Epstein's work on this film that merit attention: his deployment of filmic motion and superimpositions for the purposes of both revealing and concealing, his synesthetic "playing" with the faculties of seeing and hearing, and his use of the elements of fantasy. With this film, Epstein questions both the nature of reality and the nature of fantasy. (The author's purpose is to discuss one film as an aesthetic unity.) (RN)

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PROBES INTO THE ACTUALITY OF FANTASY: JEAN EPSTEIN'S LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER

Presented to the Special Seminar Series of
The Department of Cinema Studies of
New York University
April 2, 1973

by
Charles H. Harpole

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The seminal artistic preoccupation of film-maker Jean Epstein was the ambivalence of reality[1] as embodied in fantasy or surrealism, in the qualities of movement, and in the vagaries of seeing and hearing. In his LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER, Epstein explored these interests primarily and most intensively in the two formal filmic elements of vari-motion and superimposition but also more generally in special scenes and devices indicative of the quirks and limitations of visual and aural perception. The early avant-garde LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER[2] makes use of cinema's fluidity of fantasy/reality in ways that go far beyond most other cinema of 1928. The working out of Epstein's vision of the medium was and remains truly "in the front lines" of the creative use of film.

Although a worker in other arts too, it seems that in cinema Epstein found the best way, as he said, to transfigure ordinary things into poetry. He was not so very interested in developing a story in LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER although the film is based on the Edgar Allan Poe short stories, The Fall of the House of Usher and "The Oval Portrait." [3] Instead, Epstein says he was inspired by the Poe stories and wished to render his own resulting mood through film. The film is thus outside the normal run of purely narrative films, and in fact, is most fruitfully considered within its own framework--a framework which its formal filmic elements seem almost to invent for themselves. Epstein said that he wanted "to clean the art of film from the remnants of all the other arts, and, particularly, from literature and theatre."[4] In LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER, then, Epstein aimed for expression of tonalities and for expression through explicitly filmic means.

In seeking a self-reflective or impressionistic ambience, Epstein turned to fantasy. But, as Andre Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer have pointed out so well, the film form is so greatly suited to the representation of reality--wherever the lens turns, it copies the "realness" of the "things out there" that can be seen with the eyes.[5] Epstein's solutions to the dichotomy between his desire to render poetic fancy and the medium's tendency toward "realness" are the genius of this film. How Epstein turns this dichotomy into a symphony in

LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER lies in and perhaps can best be seen as a study in the concealed and the revealed--less in the narrative told but certainly in the use of the film medium. It is through the touchstone of "the concealed and the revealed" that I will endeavor to make clear some aspects of Epstein's film. In the case of the story, which is hardly the central issue of the work, the "concealed" is more obscure than intricate and the "revealed" is merely obvious (that is, the narrative contains some inconsistencies that are never explained and, as a story, the film is rather naïve if re-told purely as a series of events). However, the execution of concealing and revealing that comes in the film's deployment of filmic motion and superimpositions, its synesthetic playing with the faculties of seeing and hearing, and its fantasy elements is at least a part of the artistic heart of LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER. The three aspects noted will be examined in turn.

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> There are several themes which reoccur very often in Epstein's work and in his writings. To begin with, a mention should be made of his preoccupation with movement, the basic expression of film art. While the theatre is based on the spoken word, the first principle of film art is plastic movement. Movements of the objects, movements of the camera, movements of light, exaggerated motion, slow motion: In Epstein's work we can see the most beautiful examples of the right use of various speeds and rhythms of movement. The movements which reveal the very essence of the situations and things. "In the cinema," so wrote Epstein, "the movement

> is not separable from the form." In cinema, the form creates movement and the movement creates form. By discarding the empiricism of the movement as a separate action, and by uniting motion and form into one, cinema, logically, had to discard the normal movement. In Epstein's films the movement is regulated and controlled by the dramatic movements of the theme.[6]

In LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER, there is indeed an emphasis on the qualities of motion, both in the subjects photographed and filmic motion. The filmic aspect is deployed in overall camera movement and in changes in the running speed of the camera. Put in other, and perhaps better, terms, the film has scenes in which the point of viewing moves, even swings about rapidly, and scenes of film-originated vari-motion. There is also artistic use of movement of the people and things recorded on film. And, in this film work, the employment of superimposition has the effect of a close analysis of movement as well as providing evocative creative effects.

Of camera movement in LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER and Epstein's technique generally, Henri Langlois has said, "Everything contributes to this masterpiece's unity: the absolute mastery of the editing and the rhythm in which slow motion, superimpositions, traveling shots and a mobile camera always meaningfully play their parts." "He exceeded what everybody thought to be the real nature of cinematic movement...this Ph.D. of Traveling Shots...." (my italics).[7] There are several scenes in LA CHUTE which are indicative of

the power of this aspect of the cinema as Epstein revealed it. For example, two outstanding cases of camera movement (change in the point of viewing) place the viewer in the position of the camera eye. This subjective treatment is manifest in the shots of the painting of Madeline in which our point of viewing rapidly moves from a wide angle to a narrow field of view, limited to the blurred face of the painting alone. In another instance among many which could be cited, the viewer is placed in the position of vigorously moving along near the floor behind and within a flurry of leaves as they blow along the hall in la maison Usher. What makes these shots especially deserving of note is not only the historical innovation represented there (the film is dated 1928) but also the fact that, within the context of the film, these shots serve as a shock to the viewer since he is forced into a subjective posture, suddenly, in what is for most of its running time, a film of objective camera point of viewing. LA CHUTE is, after all, a tale of mystery and horror and this filmic device amplifies that tone as it lulls us with the objective camera--then slams us subjectively, in the examples noted here, either into the face of the hypnotically dreadful (At the closest position to the painting, we see what looks to be a death's head.) or into the middle of the mysterious rush of the leaves and the wind (evocative of the ethereal). In these two cases as well as others, the inner truth of the events is displayed while the progress of the narrative

is halted and momentarily obscured. That is, as viewers we seem to be inside the frame, at these moments, experiencing what we might feel if these fantastic occasions became actuality.

There is another quite arresting scene of camera motion that obscures a sense of place so effectively that all awareness of a story in the telling is lost while the image is completely indulged. The scene in question is a trucking shot which follows Usher close up on his face as he swirls and rushes aimlessly about with the body of his dead Madeline in his arms. Here, the spiraling camera movement (which seems to track backward in front of Usher as he comes toward the camera) combined with the wildly distraught look of Usher, expresses vividly the sense of exaltation and disbelieving fear which so characterizes the film's view of death.

Even greater innovative filmic technique is found in Epstein's use of varied, especially slow, motion. Using a Debrie high speed camera[8] Epstein and his brilliant crew (which included Bunuel) regulated the camera running speed slightly in many of the scenes of LA CHUTE and greatly in several.[9] These experiments, as the film-maker seemed to think of them, came to full fruition, Epstein said, in his variable-speed sound and vari-motion film, LE TEMPESTAIRE (1947). However, there is more than enough apt use of slow motion in LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER to recommend it as a minor

masterpiece. Marie Epstein says of the tone of LA CHUTE, "In order to express this mystery and this charm, Jean Epstein used all his masterful technique, and it is the first time that he gave such dramatic importance to slow motion, which he was later to use regularly in order to lose no part of the most fleeting aspects of life."[10] Again we see Epstein's preoccupation with catching the elusive ambivalent reality of life.

The use of vari-motion is one of the major means Epstein employed to overcome the dichotomy between the usual "realness" of the film medium and his wish to render molded, poetic images. Slow motion, for example, takes us out of "the real" quite effectively without otherwise distorting the visual lifelikeness of the photographed object or person. The result is potential for poetic (that is, wrought) expression without interruption of the continuity of visual versimilitude. Even in the superimposition scenes examined in detail below, the objects photographed keep their scale and appearance--no distorting lenses nor light flashes nor evocative, "metaphoric" cut-aways are used in these scenes.

Too, the slow motion in LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER is a central aspect of the "revealing" activity of Epstein's use of the filmic. The "revealing" occurs in the slowing down and studying of motion. Epstein says:

> ...it seems to me that it would be impossible for me to shoot a film without having a high speed camera at my disposal. There are an

> infinite number of movements, of expressions, as much among my human actors as among the things that act in my films and in all the details of every landscape that the normal camera is mechanically incapable of comprehending, of seizing, of reproducing. It's not a question in the use I make of this slow-motion, of simply or bizarrely decomposing a few subtle plastic aspects of the mobile world. Slow-motion actually brings a new range to dramaturgy. Its power of laying bare the emotions, of dramatic enlargements, its infallibility in the designation of the sincere movements of the soul, are such that it obviously outclasses all the known tragic modes at this time.[11]

And being more specific, he observes:

> I know of nothing so absolutely moving as a face, delivering itself of an expression, in slow motion. First, an entire preparation, a slow fever, of which it's hard to say if it should be compared to the incubation of a disease, a progressive maturity, or, more grossly, to a pregnancy. Finally, all this effort overflows, breaks the rigidity of a muscle. A contagion of movements animates the face. The wing of the eyelid and tuft of the chin pulse together. And when the lips finally separate to indicate the cry, we have already witnessed its long and magnificent dawn. This power of separation which belongs to the mechanical and optical super-eye makes the relativity of time clearly manifest. It's true then that seconds last for hours! The drama is situated outside of ordinary time. A new, purely psychological perspective is obtained.[12]

Now that the issues of Epstein's vari-motion have been raised, let us consider several scenes in LA CHUTE to observe his practice. The question of the addition of superimposition to varied motion must be delayed for a moment until we see the one technique operating independently.

In four typical scenes, objects are shown blowing and falling in slow motion. Epstein believed, he said, that

"objects have attitudes," and Jonas Mekas observes of LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER that "objects serve the same purposes as actors...."[13] These are strikingly accurate remarks especially when considering the floating veil and blowing curtains that undulate in slow motion. The curtains (in a kind of hall) are shown repeatedly through the film to evoke a tone of mystery in the inexplicable powers that circulate through the maison and Usher himself. The effect is comparable to the use of the naked trees lining darkened landscapes in other parts of the work. But the key here is the fact that we have time, in the slowed motion, to feel the eerie effects of the large billows of the drapes even while our minds tell us that the blowing, in reality, would be very fast. This combination of what we know about conditions in actuality and the "playing against the grain" of this knowledge with slow motion creates the ambience reflective of that typical in a Poe tale. Similarly, when Madeline's white veil-like shroud floats on the wind in exaggerated slowness, this tone and enigma of life-becoming-death is especially made evident. The slowed falling of books and, later, a mounted suit of armour take on the same effect, with the added fillip of heavy objects seeming to resist, again mysterously, the force of gravity.

Exploration of the qualities of motion--via camera movement and slow motion--is joined in LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER to use of superimposition. The result is an amplification of

the sense of movement implicit in the film. The central scenes of the work, wherein Madeline's psychic and physical energy is finally drained completely, are a compendium of these, Epstein's best techniques.

The sequence expressive of Madeline's desintegration and death begins with her posing for Usher as he paints. In a medium shot in front of some curtains Madeline stands swaying slowly as if nearly fainting from exertion. Then a second image of her is added, slightly out of register with the first, but not a duplicate. After a cut-away shot to Usher painting madly, Madeline is seen again in superimposition, now in three images. Then, following the next brief cut-away to Usher, she is again displayed in triple superimposition--each image is of equal clarity, none is a duplicate of the other, and each sways among the others so that they are all only partially overlapping at any one moment. The images do not move at normal speed all the time: each independently seems to slow and speed slightly in a random pattern. Thus this startling effect combines vari-motion and superimposition. However, after another cut-away, the fourth of these shots appears, again with three images, but only for a few moments. In this fourth segment, a fourth superimposed image is used, but this latter overlay is in negative (i.e., perhaps negative printing rather than normal blacks and whites), is larger than the others, and seems to loom rather than move. This negative image is of Madeline's head as it might look in a

death mask. Then, after another cut-away to Usher at work, only two superimposed figures are visible--the negative one and one of the swaying regular images. The implication is, perhaps, that the death figure is dominating the living one, especially since the last shot of this part of the sequence is of Madeline's head seen alone and looking like dead, worn stone. The shot is seven frames in length and has the piercing power of the shouting mouth shot in Eisenstein's STRIKE. The death's head shot is followed by Usher's wild, maddened face in an ecstasy of creation.[14]

After an interlude in which she somewhat recovers from her near-faint, Madeline returns to her position as model. She sinks down in a real faint soon after and again slow motion and superimposition are used with the addition of some replaying of portions of her movements. That is, through a series of shots intercut with brief views of Usher at work or glowing candles, the Madeline figure falls in slow motion, and as she falls, a second image of her follows her like a ghost. The fall is not continuous, however, since later shots covering the arc of her fall repeat, sometimes from different camera angles, portions of the arc of her fall. Epstein's analysis of movement is thus completely revealed: the motion is slowed, repeated visually with a second (or more) image, and replayed--all to the end of <u>seeing</u> more fully.

In the latter part of the film, more slow motion and superimpositions are used. Most notable are the scenes in

which Madeline's body is carried to the tomb and, in remarkable use of the medium, multiple exposure shots convey the nailing on of the coffin lid. These scenes are as powerful for the same reasons as those in which Madeline collapses.

There is more motion analysis, in a minor way, with movement of the characters in ordinary speed, such as an extreme close-up of the cloaked back of the cart driver,[15] but nothing to equal the sequences described above. The camera movement is made all the more powerful, in these best scenes, for its sudden bursts of motion. The use of slow motion distends time, increasing suspense, and allows for both more full awareness of movement as movement and also, through greater flexability of the medium, opens possibilities of a further range of film poetry. The use of superimpositions and subject motion also compound Epstein's artistic flexability for expression of subtle moods and tonalities. As Epstein says, "That surrealistic state which tends toward the dramatic... by careful use of slow motion, can and should be used...notably in poetic films or in films of fantasy...."[16]

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Epstein's play in LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER with the faculties of seeing and hearing is essentially a performance in the revealed and the obscured. This is one of the few silent films that shows awareness of and makes creative use of its own silent nature. Too, the film shows more than

a superficial control of the medium's possibilities for both confusing and pointing up our visual attention. The ambivalence of actuality and fantasy comes to the fore, as will be seen, through Epstein's synesthetic handling of visual and potentially aural events.

The strangeness of discussing sound in a silent film[17] is quickly overcome when we realize that LA CHUTE is in part a dalliance with the silent-ness of the medium. For a man who wished not only to see but to hear the grass grow,[18] mere ordinary silent film would be too small a canvass. Epstein obscures sound, frustrates our sense of hearing, merely by presenting a silent film in itself. But more than that, he takes a simple device, the old man's ear trumpet (carried by the character played by Charles Lamy), and builds a continuing filmic metaphor from it. The old man is as deaf in the film as we are watching it which means we must get all of our sound clues from our vision--quite a synesthetic experience in itself--and his ear trumpet directs our eyes toward the causitive elements of what, if there were a sound track, would ordinarily be audible. That is, the creation of a central character in a silent film who is mostly deaf places the audience both expressively and actually in the position of the character. We are deaf right along with the old man. When he struggles to hear,
we struggle to hear, but not only is there nothing to be heard actually (no sound track), frequently within the

context of the story, there is doubt as to the existence of sounds. The old man thinks he hears a noise in Usher's house, then shakes his head in rejection of the idea. However, in one scene at least, just as he is rejecting the idea of there being any sound, we see evidences of a roaring gale slicing through the hall. (Incidentially, this scene is typical of the source of the humor that is in LA CHUTE.) Too, his very rejection causes us all the more to concentrate on that wind, or falling armour, or whatever "soundful" silent effect is at hand. At times, the characters can not hear what we see to be making sounds. Conversely, on occasion the characters, Usher especially, seem to hear what we never know about. There is a kind of real and reverse dramatic irony in the "heard" and the unheard in this film.

Along with the ear trumpet pointing the way toward sound makers, LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER contains excellent use of the visual to reveal the idea of sounds being made. The nailing shut of the coffin and the falling books are minor examples, but best is the striking the old, unused clock. The clock bell is dome shaped and covered with grainy dust. In extreme close-up, we see the striker pull back and hit the bell. A film-maker lacking Epstein's inventiveness may have let the effect go at that, but Epstein goes on to show the grains of dust falling off the bell, coursing outward and down almost like sound vibrations. This is a genius's complete relevation of the synesthetic--"visible sound."

There is in this work an execution of obscured and revealed sight as well as sound. For example, at one point the old man puts down his ear trumpet and takes up his large magnifying reading glass--he changes senses like changing clothes! That magnifying glass is used somewhat like the ear trumpet in that it highlights and directs attention within the film frame. Much like the very early film, GRANDPA'S READING GLASS, the camera moves in on and follows the magnifying glass over a written message, directing concentration like a frame within the film frame.

Further, the use of the close-up itself is judicious and skillful in LA CHUTE. The device has, Epstein says, "that secret freedom, that mysterious consciousness, that true enigma which resides in a mere close-up."[19] The close-ups in this film reveal, for example, the wind in near shots of blowing leaves, and the fantastic in close-ups of the frogs and the guitar strings breaking with no visible cause. However, the close-up can also conceal, in its narrow selection of a field of viewing. The viewer is mislead more than once by extreme close-ups of what appears to be only a mass of texture but, upon cuts to wider angle shots, the true nature becomes clear. For example, early in the film the startling close-up of moving texture is seen later to be the back of a cart driver's cloak as he hurries away from the house of Usher. The same kind of obscuring and revealing is performed in shots of vines on a wall, but the extreme close-up of Usher's

painter's palette, which he later indicates contains some marvelous pattern or even a face, has no discernable meaning to viewers. Too, close-up framing creates suspense as in the shots of the painting hung in the hall, labeled "Lady Madeline." We are never allowed to see enough to solve that enigma.

Thus, in obscuring and revealing, Epstein deploys the filmic medium to his advantage and does, as he wished, things impossible in any other medium. The use of visuals to express sound is an interesting kind of synesthesia. The film manipulates its audience's seeing and hearing in such a way that the ambiguity of actuality is proclaimed along with the flexable power of the cinema.

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The elements of fantasy, beyond the technical filmic innovations, are quite important in this film which strikes against the traditional modes of narrative cinema. Epstein's fascination with the fantasy within reality is evident. In the "Reality of Fairyland" chapter of his Esprit du Cinema, Epstein says:

> Cinematographic sight allows us to note unsuspected depths of fairyland in nature which, by dint of always looking at it in the same manner, we have finally exhausted, by explaining it entirely, by even ceasing to see it. By withdrawing us from the routine of our sight, the film teaches us anew to be astonished in the presence of a reality which, perhaps, is still entirely uncomprehended, and of which perhaps no element is incomprehensible.[20]

The fantasy of LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER contains statements about the power of art and artistic creation, as well as elements of the supernatural arising from the mise en scène and the mystification of death.

There is now, of course, a tradition of films treating the artist and artistic creation of which Cocteau's THE BLOOD OF A POET and Bergman's MAGICIAN are a part. The central issue of the theme of LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER is the power of art and its relation to life and death. Usher is a painter driven to create a "likeness" of his Madeline so true-to-life that the life in her seems to be flowing into the painting. Her final collapse coincides with the completion of the work of art, and when it burns later, she returns to vitality. Thus, art which exalts can also destroy. However, as Epstein says, "these dead people are only slightly dead."[21]

So too, there is a mystification of death in LA CHUTE. The elements of fantasy and death, the flowing white shroud, the casket providing its own locomotion, the eerie tomb, the mists, the double exposures of burning candles over desolate landscapes and the two coupled frogs, are present in abundance. Cinematic treatment is essential in most of these scenes whether, for example, it is stop-motion animation of the moving casket or the double exposures. And, these scenes have an ambience of tender dread--reflective of Epstein's belief that Poe's stories are not macabre but rather say that "death itself is a sort of charm." "The mystery is where this equilibrium is created which presents a soul now in life, now in death."[22]

Epstein's mise en scène is also reflective of ambivalent fantasy-reality. Many of the settings, including all of the exteriors, come through the film medium with great realism. Stylization occurs inside the main room of the house and at the end of the film when the house burns. There is somewhat of a jarring note struck when there are cuts from the realistic to the stylized, but the context of the film and especially the slow motion and superimpositions smooth the way for the mixed mise en scène.

The mise en scène of LA CHUTE also is realized by a series (five or six) of similar shots of bleak landscapes and especially of bare tree limbs crossing the screen in the foreground. These shots of bleakness are used as a kind of "visual metaphor" (or in the terms of Christian Metz, "non-diagetic shot interpolation"[23]) that comments upon the narrative without being explicitly a part of the narrative at the moment. Such shots are, for example, interspersed with those of Usher singing and are expressive of the nature of the song, perhaps, or of the mood of the scene.

Extensive demonology is also a part of the mise en scène as might be expected in a film inspired by Poe stories. Without going into too extensive analysis, we can observe the demonological elements of the crossing of water; the fire of the fireplace, the candles, and the final destruction; the candles themselves; the bell; the large book; and the black dog on a bridge.

The aspects of fantasy are also developed through the use of filmic motion and superimposition as has already been described. However, the operation of the whole delicate balance that Epstein strikes between fantasy and reality is made possible finally, only through the elements of the mise en scène.

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LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER, then, is an embodiment of Jean Epstein's creative preoccupations. The film is a probe into the nature of reality (which is what fantasy is, too)[24] through fantastic elements basic to the filmic medium. LA CHUTE casts doubt on the reliability of the senses as they ordinarly operate in the world of accustomed reality by deploying filmic motion and superimposition in the ways we have just discussed. Too, the questioning of the senses of seeing and hearing come in for special challenge in the synesthesia and playful obscuring and revealing of "sounds" and sights in the film. Jean Epstein's inspiration from Poe and self-reflective filmic rendering of the tonalities of his inspiration in LA CHUTE do "transfigure ordinary things into poetry."

NOTES

[1] See especially "Reality and Fairyland" chapter of Esprit du Cinema (1955) and selections of Le Cinema du Diable (1947).

[2] The print of LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER (1928) used in this study is a circulating print from the Museum of Modern Art in New York. I found no extant textual criticism of this print nor of the work as it came from Epstein's hand. Short of a trip to La Cinematheque Francaise in Paris (where it is likely that earlier generations of prints may be available), and perhaps not even there, it has been impossible for me to determine the extent of the textual validity of the print I studied. At least one bit of internal evidence, changes in the style of word lettering on the inter-title cards, suggests at least some re-working of the film text. However, the Museum print is in good condition, physically, and, because of the Museum's reputation for reliability, this print was judged reliable enough for the purposes of this study. The LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER print was viewed completely by projector three times and by Steenbeck viewer four times. Any footage notations are from the Steenbeck machine. However, the machine I used was not fitted for "silent speed" nor variable speed film advance, and motion analysis is comensurately less accurate. Also thanks should go to the Anthology Film Archives, repository of the best collection on Epstein I found.
Film Credits: "A film by Jean Epstein;" Assistant: Luis Bunuel; camera: George Lucas; Sets: P. Kefer; costumes: Oclise; "interpreted by M. Gance and Jean Decourt;" Cast: Usher- J. Debucourt, Madeline- M. Abel-Gance, Old man- Chas. Lamy. (Credits taken partially from the screen.)

[3] Epstein has said, "I have crystallized a number of scenic elements from Poe's work, and especially from The Oval Portrait, Berenice, Ligeia, Morella, Silence, and The Man of the Crowd." Noted in "A Conversation with Jean Epstein." L'Ami du Peuple, (May 11, 1928), translated by R. Lamberton and reprinted in the Anthology Film Archives screening notes of October 1971, p. 5, for the Epstein retrospective screenings.

[4] Epstein, Jean. As quoted in translation in Gideon Bachmann, ed. The First Comprehensive Presentation of the Work of Jean Epstein in the United States. N.Y.: The Group for Film Study, n.d. Bachmann's edition relies heavily on material translated from the French in Cinemages, # 2 (1955-56).

[5] Siegfried Kracauer, Theory of Film (N.Y.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1960) and André Bazin, What is Cinema? Vols. I and II. trans. by Hugh Gray. (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1967 & 1972). I refer to their critical stands more to illuminate my point about Epstein than to try to defend Kracauer or Bazin. (I use the word "reality" here to refer to photographed situations that look more like the world we see with our eyes than do the occasions in the film of superimposition and vari-motion; see especially footnote 24 on this point of "reality.")

NOTES, CONTINUED

[6] Jonas Mekas in Bachmann, pp. 10-11.

[7] Henri Langlois, "The Creative Work of Jean Epstein," Cinemages, # 2 (1955) as translated by B. Braude in the program notes of the retrospective screening of the Anthology Film Archives, (Oct. 1971), pp. 10 and 12.

[8] Pierre France, "Jean Epstein's Edgar Allan Poe," Photo-Cine, (April 1928) as translated by R. Lamberton in the program notes of the Anthology Film Archives, p. 5.

[9] Ibid, p. 5.

[10] Marie Epstein, "The Life of the Filmmaker," Cinemages, # 2 (1955) as translated by B. Braude in the program notes of Anthology Film Archives, p. 2.

[11] Jean Epstein, as quoted in Photo-Cine by Pierre France and reprinted in translation by R. Lamberton in the program notes of the Anthology Film Archives, p. 5.

[12] Jean Epstein, "The Soul in Slow Motion," Paris-Midi-Cine, (May 11, 1928) and reprinted in translation by R. Lamberton in the program notes of the Anthology Film Archives, p. 5.

[13] Mekas in Bachmann, p. 11.

[14] This sequence takes place at roughly the 500-550 footage points in the film.

[15] Early in the first 300 feet of the film.

[16] Jean Epstein, "Supernatural Reality," from his book Le Cinema du Diable (1947) as it appears in Bachmann, p. 41.

[17] I am unable to establish any use of live musical performances with the showing of this film and thus am dealing with it as a purely silent film.

[18] Jean Epstein, "Sound in Slow Motion," as it appeared in Bachmann, p. 45.

[19] Jean Epstein, "Reality of Fairyland," in Esprit du Cinema, (Paris: Jeheber, 1955) as it appeared in Bachmann, p. 44.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Jean Epstein, "Some Notes on Edgar Allan Poe and Images Endowed with Life," Photo-Cine, (April 1928) as translated by R. Lanberton in the program notes of the Anthology Film Archives, p. 4.

[22] *Ibid.*

[23] Christian Metz, "Entretien sur la sémiologie du cinéma," *Semiotica*, IV, # 1 (1971).

[24] That is, fantasy, as a strategy in art, is a probe into the nature of reality. Fantasy and reality are two sides of one conceptual coin; the mind can differentiate the two only on the basis of context. Thus in Epstein's film, the presence of what I describe as reality serves as a counterpoint to the sequences of fantasy. In realizing these qualities in his film, Epstein conveys the idea of the relative intensities of life—life is more intense in his scenes of fantasy.

All this is not to say that screen reality is reality in the usual sense of that word. As Paul Ilie observes, Epstein "also considered screen reality to be a second reality distinct from the everyday world..." ["Surrealism and Cinema." *Discritics*, II, # 4 (Winter 1972), 56]. A part of my own view of this topic can be seen in "What is a Documentary...." *Filmmakers Newsletter*, VI, # 6 (April 1973), 25-27.

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COUR FIDELE (1923) [THE FAITHFUL HEART]; fiction.

LA MONTAGNE INFIDELE (1923) [THE FAITHLESS MOUTAIN]; documentary of the eruption of Mount Aetna on June, 1923.

LA BELLE NIVERNAISE (1923) [THE BEAUTY FROM NIVERNAIS]; after story by Alphonse Daudet.

-- LA GOUTTE DE SANG (1924) [A DROP OF BLOOD]; Epstein left the direction of this film early in the production.

LE LION DES MOGOLS (1924) [THE LION OF THE MOGULS]; drama.

L'AFFICHE (1924) [THE POSTER]; drama, scenario by Marie Epstein.

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LES AVENTURES DE ROBERT MACAIRE (1925); drama in five episodes.

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SA TETE (1929) [HIS HEAD]; drama.

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